

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

E. Keller

NCPC File No. 6402



**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE HEADQUARTERS BUILDING  
PERIMETER SECURITY UPGRADES  
PRELIMINARY SITE AND BUILDING PLANS  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC**

Submission by the General Services Administration

October 30, 2003

---

### *Abstract*

The General Services Administration (GSA) has submitted preliminary site and building plans for perimeter security enhancements at the Department of Justice Headquarters (DOJ) Building at 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. The project would add limited pedestrian and vehicular security access controls consisting primarily of reinforced gates. Like most federal facilities in the central downtown vicinity, the DOJ building has been exhibiting temporary-type vehicular barriers at various locations near the main vehicle entry areas. The proposed security project has developed significantly since it was first presented to Commission staff and now reflects some of the objectives of the Commission's *Urban Design and Security Plan* by enhancing existing site features, removing discordant elements, and introducing compatibly designed architectural elements to provide the necessary security.

### *Commission Action Requested by Applicant*

Approval of preliminary site and building plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)).

---

### *Executive Director's Recommendation*

The Commission:

- **Approves** the preliminary site and building plans for perimeter security upgrades at the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Street entrances of the Department of Justice Headquarters building at 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.23(38.00)-41253.
- **Requires in the submission of final site and building plans:**
  - Modify of the vehicle gate top enclosure to be more compatible with the historic architectural style of the building, and to provide a smooth design transition where the top of the gate meets the historic, interior roof portal detailing.

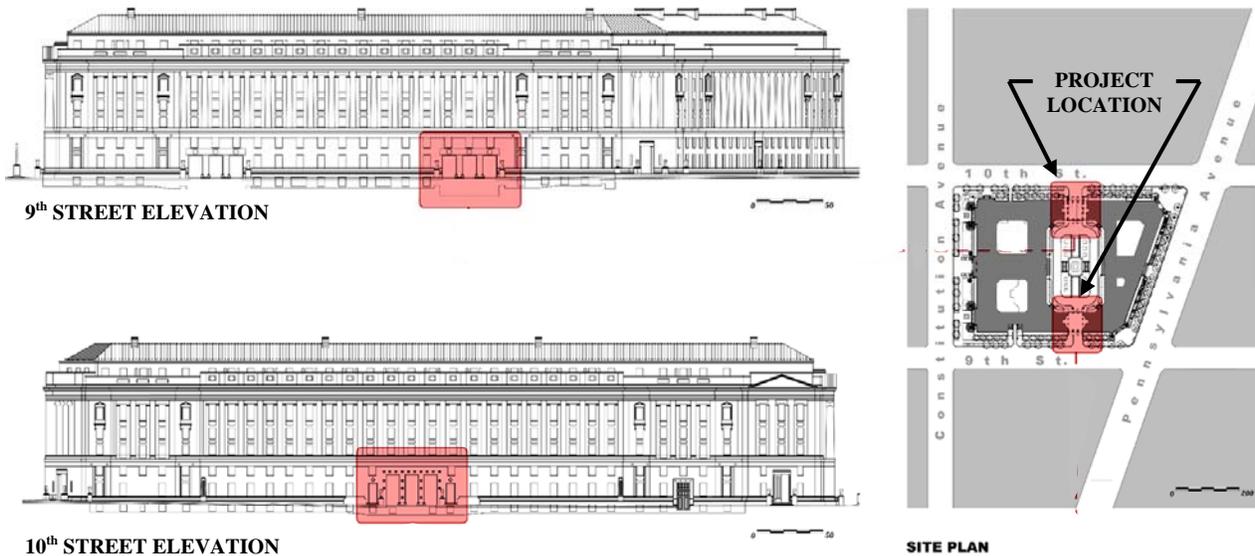
- Redesign and relocation of the exterior metal railings leading to the public walk areas in a manner consistent with the design elements and streetscape hierarchy of the north-south streets of the Federal Triangle, as described in the National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan.
- Development of a preliminary site development plan indicating the entire building's perimeter security improvements, to be created in consultation with Commission staff, which is consistent with the National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan.

\* \* \*

## BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

### *PROJECT DESCRIPTION*

The General Services Administration, on behalf of the Department of Justice (DOJ), has submitted preliminary site and building plans for locating, and upgrading additional building perimeter security elements at the main DOJ Headquarters Building situated at 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. The actual project work areas occur only at the east and west facades of the building facing 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets as shown in the diagram below. Both employee's cars and service trucks enter through portal areas into the interior courtyard of the building. Pedestrians also are able to enter the building, adjacent to the portals, through two revolving doors on either side.



### PROJECT SITE LOCATION WITH SITE PLAN AT RIGHT

Parking and loading docks are located below the interior courtyard. The proposed improvements will replace temporary vehicle restrictions – dropping gate arms and some round-form concrete planters – and allows the reuse of the building’s doorway areas and opens the public walk.

### Existing Site and Building

The DOJ Headquarters Building is located within the Federal Triangle enclave situated between Constitution Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue to the south and north respectively. The Federal Triangle is part of the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site. It is comprised of a unified group of important and prominent federal office buildings. Situated on a large trapezoidal lot bounded by Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues and 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets, the DOJ building was designed by the Philadelphia architectural firm Zantzinger, Borie and Medary and was constructed between 1931 and 1935. The Classical Revival style building is distinguished by Art Deco architectural elements and its innovative use of aluminum for details. All entrances to the building feature 20-foot-high aluminum doors that slide into recessed pockets. Fifty-seven sculptural elements designed by C. Paul Jennewein adorn the building. Within the building, 68 murals completed between 1935 and 1941 depict scenes of daily life from throughout American history and symbolic interpretations or allegorical themes relating to the role of justice in our society.

The DOJ building is considered a high security risk building due to both its function as a primary agency building and the large number of federal employees (2,558) working within the structure as a key agency of the federal government.

### Proposed Perimeter Security Measures

The proposed perimeter security improvements are intended to provide the necessary vehicular access and barrier control, and also allow convenient, recognizable pedestrian entry to the structure, while still maintaining architectural compatibility with this important historic structure. These objectives are accomplished through the use of a variety of security solutions including:

- A combination of stationary and retractable bollards along the street edge.
- Sets of handrails to direct pedestrian traffic between the existing sidewalk and the exterior (street side) face of the building.
- Vehicular and pedestrian gates just inside the portal at the exterior (street side) face of the building.
- Vehicular and pedestrian gates (similar to the gates listed immediately above) just inside the portal at the inside face (courtyard side) of the building.
- Renovation of the existing revolving doors on either side of the two portals. Provision is also made for pivot brakes and collapsing door prevention in order to avert access during a security incident.
- Removal of the existing vehicular barrier swing arms currently located at several of the vehicle lanes.
- Removal of some of the concrete planters that are replaced by the proposed curbside bollards.

The existing, Commission-approved guard booths would remain unchanged at their current locations at each portal. Moreover, most of the existing freestanding planterboxes would remain at their current location until a more comprehensive design solution is prepared for the streetscape adjacent to all main facades of the main building. DOJ anticipates continued future work to achieve the streetscape improvements.

The submitted project bollards occur only at the vicinity of the vehicle driveways and are a combination of simple hydraulically movable cast iron bollards and end terminal granite bollards at the curbside. The 12-inch diameter movable bollards will be located four feet on-center and 42 inches in height. The stationary bollards match the existing granite bollards.

Operational format for the security design is multi-faceted. The security equipment at the 10<sup>th</sup> Street gate will be activated are listed below:

Scenario #1 - Morning and afternoon rush hour - 7:30 am - 9:30 am and 4:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Bollards	Down
Street Side Gates	Closed
Courtyard Side Gates	Open

Scenario #2 - Monday thru Friday non-rush hour - 9:30 am to 4:30 pm

Bollards	Down
Street Side Gates	Closed
Courtyard Side Gates	Closed

Scenario #3 - After hours (7:00 pm to 7:30 am) and on weekends

Bollards	Up
Street Side Gates	Closed
Courtyard Side Gates	Closed

Scenarios #4 - Emergency Situation - Hostile Intruders

Bollards	Up
Street Side Gates	Closed
Courtyard Side Gates	Closed
Revolving Doors	Locked

Pedestrian gates at the courtyard will be closed at all times requiring electronic screening access.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Street gates will typically be closed with the bollards up. The 9<sup>th</sup> Street gates would normally be used for scheduled commercial deliveries only. However, there are occasions when DOJ would need to use the 9<sup>th</sup> Street gate in a similar fashion to the 10<sup>th</sup> Street gate.

### *PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION*

The Commission at its meeting of June 1, 2000 approved the preliminary and final site and building plans for guard booths at the employee/visitor 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Street underground parking entrances to the Main Justice Building, 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.23(38.00)-40801. This approval included the granite bollards located at the front of the guardhouse structures.

On August 6, 1998, the Commission approved the preliminary and final site and building plans for perimeter security cameras at the U.S. Department of Justice, Main Building, 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.23(38.00)-40545.

On April 6, 1989, the Commission approved the preliminary and final site plans for the exterior security improvements at the Department of Justice Building, 10th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.23(38.00)-30180, involving site plans for the installation of concrete planters.

### *URBAN DESIGN AND SECURITY PLAN*

The submitted project plan has undergone security review and analysis by DOJ security personnel to meet the objectives of the Department for protection measures. Selection of proposed building gate materials and the location of limited freestanding elements, including bollards, have been identified in the National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan (UDSP) approved by the Commission in October 2002.

As described in the UDSP, the area of the Federal Triangle specifically addressing the DOJ Headquarters states:

“Within the Federal Triangle, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has a designed perimeter security for its headquarters building on Pennsylvania Avenue. It’s recommended that the streetscape designs for the surrounding streets of Pennsylvania Avenue on the north, Constitution Avenue on the south, and the typical streetscape design proposed for the north-south streets in the Federal Triangle apply to the DOJ headquarters building.”

### The Design Framework

The proposed Pennsylvania Avenue streetscape design concept, which involves a portion of the DOJ site, constitutes a new design for the 1974 Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation plan for the avenue. The design incorporates hardened components that are consistent with the existing design of the avenue, e.g., benches, drinking fountains, etc., and includes the addition of bollards at the corners and at major entrances to the buildings.

- The proposed Constitution Avenue streetscape incorporates a plinth wall design that raises the existing coping stone on the inside of the sidewalk.
- The Federal Triangle north-south streetscape design (underline emphasis added) introduces a fence and bollard wall at the curbside of the tree planting beds. Bollards are

incorporated in the sidewalk between this wall and at vehicular entrances where retractable bollards and/or gate arms are employed.



**EXAMPLE FROM UDSP OF FEDERAL TRIANGLE NORTH /SOUTH  
STREET FENCE AND BOLLARD DESIGN APPLICATION**

- Guardhouses are proposed to be custom-designed for compatibility with the building architecture.
- Given the high level of security applicable to the DOJ and the special condition that exists on 10th Street between Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues, the Plan recommends incorporating the existing curb/parking lanes on both sides of this block in widened sidewalks, thereby increasing the standoff distance. This widening of the sidewalk incorporates the redesign of this predominately pedestrian street in a manner appropriate to its limited traffic use and termination at the Constitution Avenue entrance to the National Museum of Natural History.

*EVALUATION*

As the federal government's central planning agency for the National Capital Region, NCPC reviews projects in the context of planning principles established by the Commission. In the construct of the Federal Triangle, the Commission seeks an appropriate balance between providing secure environments and maintaining openness and an attractive public face to this area to the greatest degree possible while recognizing legitimate security requirements of the individual federal agencies.

DOJ representatives and their design team met with Commission staff in the winter of 2002 and the late spring of 2003, and staff made recommendations based on the UDSP that were offered to guide the design proposal. While staff recognizes that significant design effort and conformance to architectural principles have crafted the design's commendable appearance, there are aspects to the submittal that have not demonstrated recognition of the goals of the UDSP. Perhaps most

significantly is that the proposal, in the context of the streetscape enhancement and public realm beautification, does not demonstrate the high level of unification sought by the UDSP. The streetscape portions of the project (bollards, railings, and their relationship) still overstate their separate appearance as a system of components whose only purpose is security. Additionally, staff review has found the top enclosure area of vehicle gates, even though recessed, is too intrusive to the building portal and extends high above the gate doors, which adversely impacts the visual and spatial characteristics of the exterior and interior portal space. Although DOJ representatives had offered to review this aspect in early consultation meetings, no redefinition of this element has occurred. Staff believes a reduction in the top enclosure height and removal of the seal emblem is appropriate to achieve a more balanced context to the vehicle gate appearance and its relationship to the important entry (See page 10).



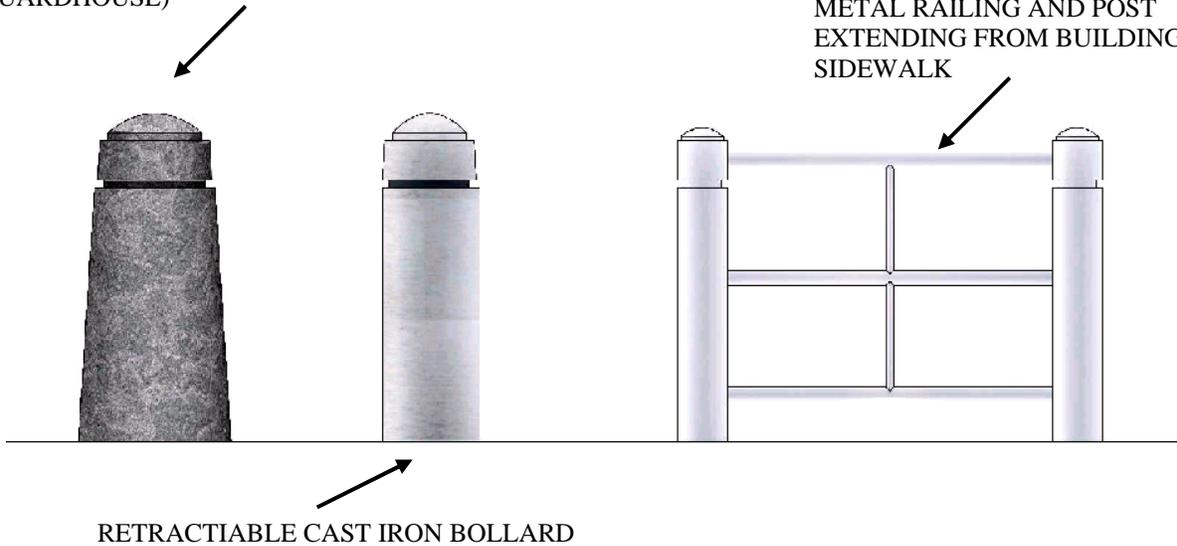
**STREET-SIDE PERSPECTIVE SIMULATION OF VEHICLE GATES and BOLLARDS with RAILINGS SEEN AT RIGHT and LEFT OF PORTAL ENTRY**

Staff recommends approval of the preliminary site and building plans but requires modification of the vehicle gate top enclosure and the exterior metal railing design illustrated in the plan. Staff believes a refinement in the railing elements can be gracefully established utilizing the portions of the currently selected features, and perhaps others as identified in the UDSP, to provide perimeter security in a manner that does not clutter the public realm, while avoiding the monotony of bollards or the incompatible assemblage of several different elements – which appears to be the potential direction of the submitted design (See site plan at page 11). Staff recommends the Commission require GSA to assist DOJ in re-evaluating railings used in the

current design, along with their location, and provide a final project site and building plan that more closely reflects the design elements and the hierarchy of streetscape design framework on the north-south streets of the Federal Triangle highlighted in the UDSP. Moreover the effort should incorporate a fence and bollard wall, if at all possible, on the curbside of the streets in the future comprehensive perimeter design at DOJ that should also feature tree planting beds.

STATIONARY GRANITE BOLLARD AT DRIVE  
(SIMILAR TO EXISTING BOLLARD AT  
GUARDHOUSE)

METAL RAILING AND POST  
EXTENDING FROM BUILDING TO  
SIDEWALK



RETRACTIBLE CAST IRON BOLLARD

**BOLLARD AND SECURITY RAILING DESIGN**

*DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM*

Applicant:	General Services Administration on behalf of the Department of Justice
Architect:	The Smith Group, Washington, DC
Square Footage:	Approximately 18,000 square feet
Estimated Cost:	Not available at this time
Schedule:	Not available at this time

*COORDINATION*

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on October 15, 2003, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been

coordinated with all agencies participating. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

### *CONFORMANCE*

#### National Historic Preservation Act

GSA, on behalf of the Department of Justice, initiated Section 106 review with the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office on October 9, 2003. GSA has determined that the project would have no adverse effect on the Department of Justice Headquarters Building because the “installation will not require permanent alterations to original building fabric, will not affect the John Earley mosaic ceilings, and will be completely reversible.”

The building is one of the most interesting and highly decorated of the buildings in the Federal Triangle. It is also notable for its outstanding Art Deco-style exterior decoration, including the polychromatic concrete mosaics designed and installed by John Joseph Earley. They were poured in place as the building was constructed and therefore are a structural element of the building. Earley received a patent for the process he developed for the Department of Justice.

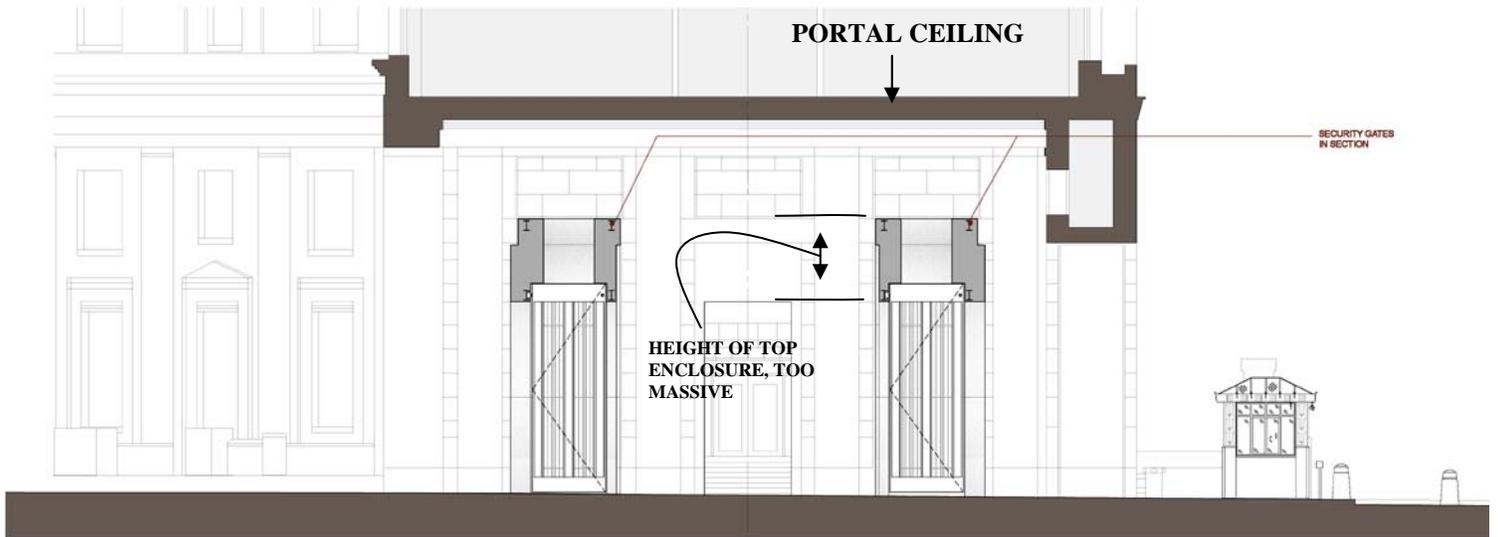
The mosaics decorate the coffers of the ceilings above the locations of the proposed security gates within the Portal entrances. It is important that they remain visible to the general public from the public realm, the sidewalk, to reflect the significance of the unique structural element that has always been available for viewing by the public as they pass the entrance areas.

#### National Environmental Policy Act

Pursuant to the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), GSA review of the proposed security elements has determined that the project plans are a categorical exclusion under its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance procedures and the GSA NEPA Compliance Guide. Staff finds, under NCPC’s project review process, the determination is recognized and acceptable given there are no outstanding or unusual circumstances regarding the proposal.

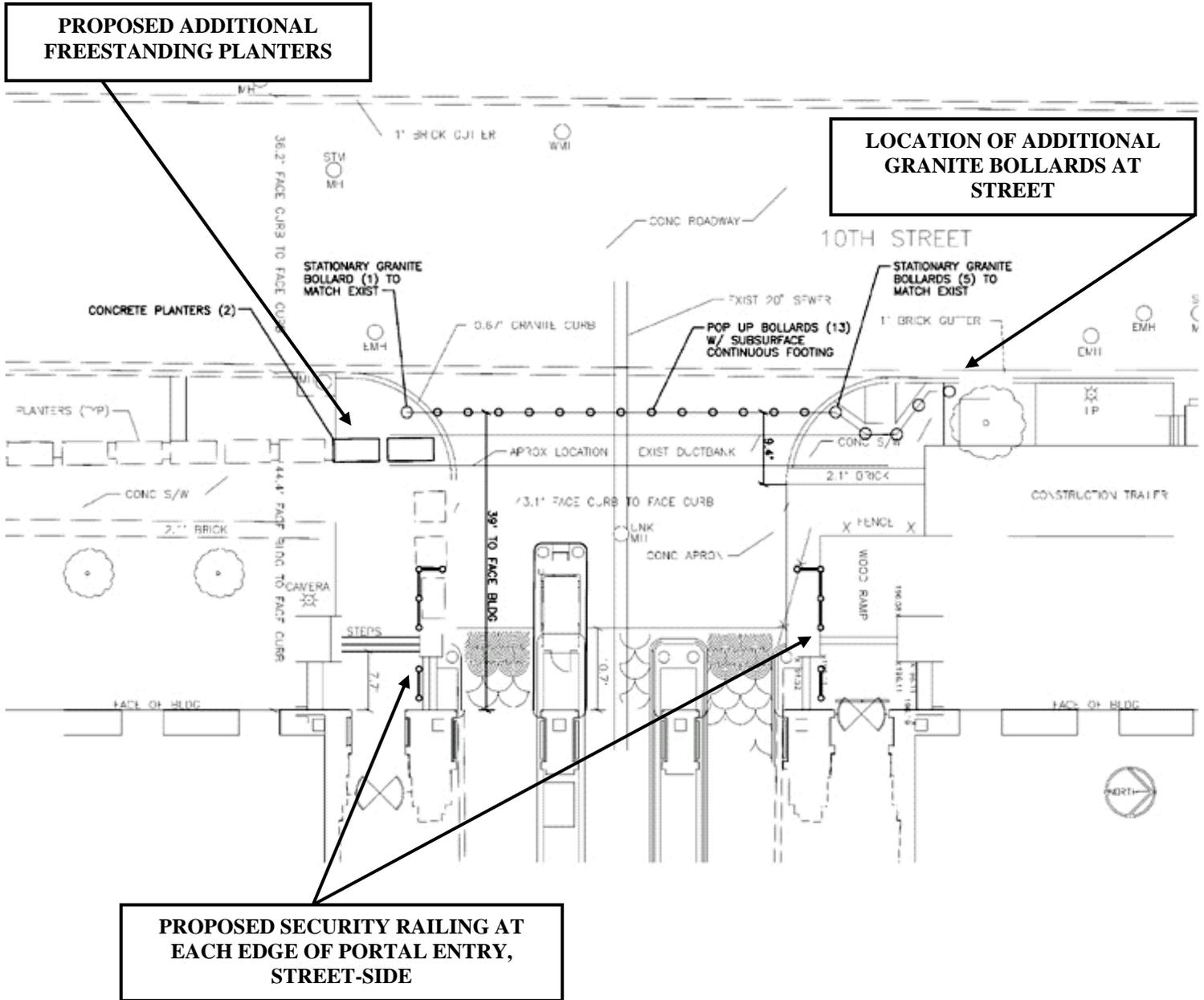
#### Comprehensive Plan

The Main Justice Building is located in the Pennsylvania Avenue Historic District and is also located adjacent to three Special Streets and two Special Places, which are designated in the Preservation and Historic Features element of the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed security



**SECTION AT PORTAL ENTRY SHOWING VEHICLE GATE ASSEMBLIES WITHIN PORTAL (Above) and SIMULATED PERSPECTIVE OF ASSEMBLE AS VIEWED WITHIN THE PORTAL SPACE (Below)**





**PORTAL ENTRY DRIVE SITE PLAN SHOWING LOCATION OF PROPOSED EXTERIOR (STREET-SIDE) SECURITY ELEMENTS**



EXTERIOR ELEVATION @9TH ST. 0 10



EXTERIOR ELEVATION @10TH ST. 0 10

**BUILDING PORTAL ELEVATIONS WITH PROPOSED SECURITY GATES**

improvements would not detract from the special character of the Historic District but may affect Special Streets qualities highlighted within the National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan. The proposal's goal generally, however, is consistent with an applicable policy contained in the Preservation and Historic Features element of the Comprehensive Plan which specifies:

The existing street space and the buildings fronting on Special Streets and Places should be maintained, protected, and enhanced. Any repair, maintenance, improvement or new building should respect the historic elements, enhance the aesthetic quality, and promote the amenity of this space.

#### Federal Capital Improvements Program

The proposed security improvements are included in the Federal Capital Improvements Program for Fiscal Years 2002-2007, as part of the Phase 2, Main Justice Building renovation program. Total funding for the Phase 2 renovation project is estimated at \$78.8 million.